

REMARKS

By the present amendment, new claims 17-24 have been added. Support for the new claims is found in the original application, in particular from page 7, line 23 to page 8, line 17 and on page 4, line 16.

Claims 1-24 are pending in the present application. Claim 1 is the only independent claim.

In the Office Action, claims 1, 3-5, and 7-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by US 5,491,001 to Mazaki et al. ("Mazaki"), and claims 2 and 6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Mazaki.

The rejections are respectfully traversed. Mazaki states that "[a]s to a plastic substrate, it is preferable for it being optically isotropic" (Mazaki at col. 26, lines 31-32). However, in the next sentence, Mazaki suggests TAC as an example of such plastic substrate. Further, Mazaki suggests using its compensator with a polarizing plate, but does not caution about reducing the inherent anisotropy of a conventional (typically, TAC) protective layer for a polarizer.

As shown in Comparison Example 1 on pages 46-47 of the present specification, a TAC film does not satisfy a difference in indices of refraction of 0.0006 or less. Mazaki is completely silent regarding reducing such inherent anisotropy. Further, Mazaki discloses providing the protective layer in an optical element with its compensator and another element such as a polarizing plate (see in particular Mazaki at col. 28, lines 47-52), but Mazaki is completely silent regarding any effect of an optical anisotropy of a TAC film on an optical compensation layer.

Thus, what Mazaki labels an “isotropic” film actually has an inherent anisotropy, but it is not noticed or not considered relevant by Mazaki in the context of its disclosure. In other words, Mazaki is satisfied with the conventional TAC film, which has inherent anisotropy as discussed above.

In summary, the term “optically isotropic” is used in Mazaki to mean a property according to the conventional knowledge, i.e., taking into account inherent (residual) anisotropy of substrates such as TAC. Therefore, Mazaki fails to teach or suggest the presently claimed invention.

In contrast, the present inventors have discovered that an optical film with an optical compensation layer (2) on one side of a base material film (1) as recited in present claim 1 is advantageous, in particular in that it is possible to reduce leakage of light and improve contrast ratio, as discussed and illustrated in the present specification. These features of the presently claimed invention and its advantages are not taught or suggested in Mazaki, and therefore, the present claims are not anticipated by, and not obvious over, Mazaki.

Further, with respect to the dependent claims, the cited reference is also completely silent as to the combinations of features recited in these respective claims. Therefore, these respective claims are not obvious over the cited reference.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the rejections should be withdrawn.

In conclusion, the invention as presently claimed is patentable. It is believed that the claims are in allowable condition and a notice to that effect is earnestly requested.

Amendment
Serial No. 10/760,546
Attorney Docket No. 042043

In the event there is, in the Examiner's opinion, any outstanding issue and such issue may be resolved by means of a telephone interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, the Applicants hereby petition for an appropriate extension of the response period. Please charge the fee for such extension and any other fees which may be required to our Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

WESTERMAN, HATTORI, DANIELS & ADRIAN, LLP



Nicolas E. Seckel
Attorney for Applicants
Reg. No. 44,373

Atty. Docket No. 042043
Customer No.: 38834
1250 Connecticut Avenue NW Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: (202) 822-1100
Fax: (202) 822-1111
NES:rep